

HEALTH

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer found in American men, other than skin cancer. We know that there will be about 189,000 new cases of prostate cancer in the United States in the year 2002. About 30,200 men will die of this disease. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men, exceeded only by lung cancer.

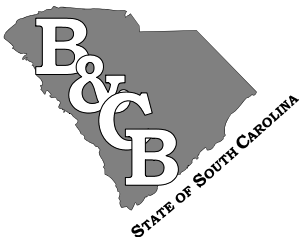
Although men of any age can get prostate cancer, it is found most often in men over 50. In fact, more than 70% of all prostate cancers are diagnosed in men over the age of 65. Prostate cancer is about twice as common among African-American men as it is among white American men. It is also most common in North America and northwestern Europe. It is less common in Asia, Africa and South America.

What Causes Prostate Cancer?

It is not known exactly what causes prostate cancer, but it is known that certain risk factors are linked to the disease. A risk factor is anything that increases a person's chance of getting a disease. Different cancers have different risk factors. Some risk factors, such as smoking, can be controlled. Others, like a person's age or family history, can't be changed. But having a risk factor, or even several, doesn't mean that a person will get the disease. However, there is evidence that the development of prostate cancer is linked to higher levels of certain hormones. High levels of male hormones (androgens) may contribute to prostate cancer risk in some men. Also, researchers have noted that men with high levels of the hormone insulin-like growth factor are more likely to develop prostate cancer.

Can Prostate Cancer Be Prevented?

Because the exact cause of prostate cancer is not known, we can't say if it is possible to prevent most cases of the disease. Since a high-fat diet may be linked to prostate cancer, we suggest a diet low in animal fat (especially from red meats) and high in vegetables, fruits, and grains. These guidelines provide an overall healthful approach to eating that also helps lower your risk for some other types of cancer. Cooked tomatoes (including ketchup and tomato sauce), grapefruit and watermelon are rich in a substance (lycopenes) that helps prevent damage to DNA and may help lower prostate cancer risk.



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